



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Dean Antipas, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Bruce S. Flax, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, and Paulann H. Sheets

Tuesday, June 9, 2009

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro and Councilor Schmidt

Members Absent: Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Sheets

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

2009-0151 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meeting of May 26, 2009 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. NEW BUSINESS

2006-0100 Thames Street Rehabilitation Study

Discussed

The Town Manager noted that City representatives and the consultants for the Thames Street Rehabilitation Project were present to make a presentation on this important project. Although the effort to bring this item to referendum in November is behind the normal schedule, it can still be done on a fast-tracked schedule if the Council so desires. The Town Manager provided a brief history of the project and noted that final design will be completed if the project is approved by the voters. The Town Council previously approved an additional appropriation of funds to allow this level of design. Jim Streeter and Rita Schmidt served on the Thames Street Rehabilitation Committee. Interim steps include making CGS 8-24 referrals to both the Town and City Planning Commissions.

Mayor Dennis Popp introduced members of the Thames Street Rehabilitation Project Committee who were present. The Committee was staffed by City Planner Barbara Goodrich and Al Chapman. Representatives from the consultant, Milone & MacBroom, were also present to address the Council.

Ms. Goodrich provided a history of Thames Street, various studies, and issues and problems associated with the area.

Tony Ciriello of Milone & MacBroom noted that a presentation of the study was made to the Council in 2006. Mr. Ciriello provided a history of the study effort, the findings, and the resulting recommendations. Mr. Ciriello reviewed the discussions regarding the one-way concept for Thames Street, which was ultimately rejected by the Thames Street Rehabilitation Project Committee. The Bridge Street component of the project has been authorized for \$1.1 million in federal stimulus funding.

Tom Sheil of Milone & MacBroom noted that Thames Street is a major corridor and he highlighted important attributes. Mr. Sheil reviewed a PowerPoint presentation showing the poor condition of the road and sidewalks, as well as retaining walls that need to be replaced. Mr. Sheil highlighted design elements of the plan and presented typical sections indicating the road character at different locations. Mr. Sheil addressed lighting, curbing, and parking. Parking will remain as it is with a limited number of on-street spaces. Mr. Sheil addressed landscaping and view preservation, and further reviewed the retaining walls and railings. Discussion followed on crosswalks and sidewalks. Mr. Sheil then reviewed the overall street layout and improvements.

Mr. Ciriello reviewed cost estimates for the project. Construction costs in 2009 dollars, plus inflation to a 2011 construction year, plus other costs totals \$10.7 million.

In response to a question from Councilor Kolnaski, Mr. Sheil reviewed the four areas of major retaining wall construction/reconstruction. There will be a fence or railing system to protect pedestrian and vehicular traffic. ADA requires sidewalks of 3½' minimum width, but they will attempt to maintain 5'-6' sidewalks. Councilor Schmidt asked if Gary Schneider's comments were included in this plan and Mr. Ciriello stated yes. Councilor Monteiro asked when the pavers that are failing were originally installed. Ms. Goodrich stated it was during a 1994-1999 phased project, but the issue has to do with the underlying surface. Mr. Ciriello added that paver products have improved over the years.

Councilor Flax questioned the purpose of the project. Mayor Popp stated that the main purpose of the project is to reconstruct the street, which is falling apart. Secondary are aesthetic improvements that will hopefully attract people with economic development to follow. Councilor Flax questioned the potential to just repair the road and not "beautify" the area. Mayor Popp explained that sidewalks are part of the improvements. In some areas, foundations of houses are holding up the road. Landscaping is a small portion of the project. Legal issues include the need to obtain easement rights. Mr. Ciriello noted that 30% of the cost is for the roadway; 10% for drainage; 20% for retaining walls; and 10% for lighting.

In response to a question from Councilor Antipas, Mr. Ciriello explained that cost estimates come from a very detailed breakdown from the State DOT catalog of contractor bids, Town/City experiences, and internal experience with recent projects. Final cost estimates are yet to be determined, but the project is being set up for a unicast system. Mr. Ciriello explained that the improvements are designed for a minimum 25-year life cycle, but the key to achieving that goal is routine maintenance.

Councilor Monteiro asked if state or federal funding was available for this project. Town Manager Oefinger explained that there was \$5.8 million in stimulus funding allocated to the entire region. Because of limited funding, the Bridge Street portion was separated out and then chosen for funding. If future funds become available, this is definitely one of the projects to advance.

The Town Manager thinks it is still possible to make a November referendum, but he would like some sense from the Committee of the Whole that they are willing to advance this project, albeit on a very tight time schedule. Discussion followed on the bond ordinance schedule and alternative dates. The RTM will also be asked to fast track their review and this item could be

referred to them at their July meeting. The consensus of the Committee of the Whole was to have the ordinance prepared by the bond attorney.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to refer this project to the Town Planning Commission and the City Planning and Zoning Commission under CGS 8-24.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

Discussion followed on holding a special meeting of the Town Council on June 23rd or June 30th.

The Committee took a 10-minute recess.

2009-0155 Bridge Street Streetscape Project - Funding for Final Engineering

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Bridge Street portion of the Thames Street project was considered by SCCOG for regional stimulus funding. Staff has received informal notice that the project will receive \$1.1 million in stimulus funds. The Town must be in a position by February 2010 to say that funds for the project are committed, which means completing final design work. This request will provide approximately \$72,000 in funds for final engineering for the Bridge Street portion of the Thames Street Rehabilitation project. The City will upfront the money because a supplemental appropriation will take two months. These funds are not eligible for stimulus dollars. The proposal is to take the funds from Contingency, or more appropriately Capital Reserve. The request will have to go before the RTM.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Antipas, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0111 Fire Districts PILOT Program

Discussed

Mayor Watson asked that this item be tabled to the next meeting. The Town Manager noted that he has spoken to individuals who have been involved in the meetings of the fire districts, and they have indicated that attendance has not been universal and no significant progress has been made. The Town Manager provided background on this issue. PILOT funds are usually provided by the Town to the fire districts around July 1st so the issue should be discussed soon if any changes are desired by the Council. Councilor Kolnaski feels that the Town should continue its past practice. The Town Manager explained that holding back funds would serve as an enticement to the fire districts to participate in a Town-wide fire assessment. The fire chiefs were originally approached by the Town Manager who indicated that the Town is willing to provide the funds to do a Town-wide assessment, with the Chiefs and others providing the guidelines for the study. The source of their resistance is unknown. The most recent meetings between the fire districts were to discuss issues of mutual concerns rather than discussing guidelines for a Town-wide assessment.

2009-0116 TVCCA Lease Agreement for 40 Central Avenue

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0013 Joint Meeting with Stonington Board of Selectmen (2009 Standing Referral)

Discussed

A joint meeting with the Stonington Board of Selectmen is tentatively scheduled for June 23rd at 7:00 p.m. as part of the regular meeting of the Committee of the Whole.

6. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

Proposed for Deletion:

2009-0083 FYE 2010 Proposed Budget Deliberations

Recommended for Deletion

7. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.